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## CHAPTER 3

# Presenting the 10 cases



## 2. Presenting the seven cases selected at sub-national level



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At sub-national level in Europe and North America, many MSMs are linked to the development and implementation of a holistic sustainable food systems policy. These groups are generally known as food policy councils (FPCs), but they also go by other names.

In contrast, such MSMs are difficult to find in the Global South. There are some cities leading the way in Latin America, but they are still at an early stage. Examples include La Paz, Quito, Lima and Medellín.

Some SFS MSMs are currently being formed in Asia and Oceania, and some of them are already engaged in the assessment of food systems and the definition of priority topics and actions. Examples include Surabaya and Melbourne.

In the case of African cities and towns, several SFS MSMs are promoted and supported by various international organizations and cooperation projects (with technical and financial support from organizations such as FAO, Rikolto, Hivos, Biovision, RUAF, the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT). Levels of local ownership, government involvement and concrete achievements vary, depending on the mechanism.

The following section presents a summary of the seven SFS MSMs selected at sub-national level: London, Ghent, Los Angeles, Montreal, Quito, La Paz and Antananarivo. The most relevant features are compiled from a literature review and the results from both surveys.



## 2.1. Ghent (Belgium): Gent en Garde Food Policy Council



Image credit: Lieta Goethijn, City of Ghent's Food Policy Coordinator

### 2.1.1. About the Gent en Garde Food Policy Council

The Gent en Garde Food Policy Council (Gent en Garde FPC) was established in 2013 as a result of a mobilization of actors following the launch of the Gent en Garde food policy. The intervention areas and concrete actions included in this policy range from the promotion of local food products to the promotion of citizen empowerment to transform the city's food system.

Although not formally institutionalized, the Gent en Garde FPC is an MSM that enjoys the full support of public authorities. The city government led the creation of the FPC with the support of the Green Party,<sup>82</sup> a social-green coalition advocating for local and sustainable food production and urban agriculture in its political plans. The process took less than four years. Today, the city of Ghent still plays the leading role in the SFS MSM, but its driving force lies in a collaborative approach. The FPC acts as a sounding board for the city's food policy, issuing recommendations on new or existing projects, proposing new ideas, discussing the city's strategic vision and serving as an important

ambassador to help promote the city's vision of sustainable food production and consumption.

The FPC plays a strong role in lobbying and advocacy, mainly at national, sub-national and city levels. It does so by fostering knowledge sharing on food systems and by conducting targeted advocacy activities at the administrative, institutional and legislative levels. To date, it has focused primarily on the topics of local food production (peri-urban agriculture), sustainable diets, food diversification, food environments and food loss and waste.

Its geographic scope of action is the city level. Its work is guided by its own framework, based on the food systems approach, presented in the Gent en Garde food policy document.

The FPC's budget amounts to approximately EUR 85,000 a year. This amount comes from public funds, on top of the city budget for food policy and food-related actions. It is spent exclusively on the SFS SMS. About EUR 60,000 are spent on innovative projects, while the rest is used to cover meeting logistics, communication and events.

<sup>82</sup><https://europeangreens.eu/countries/belgium>



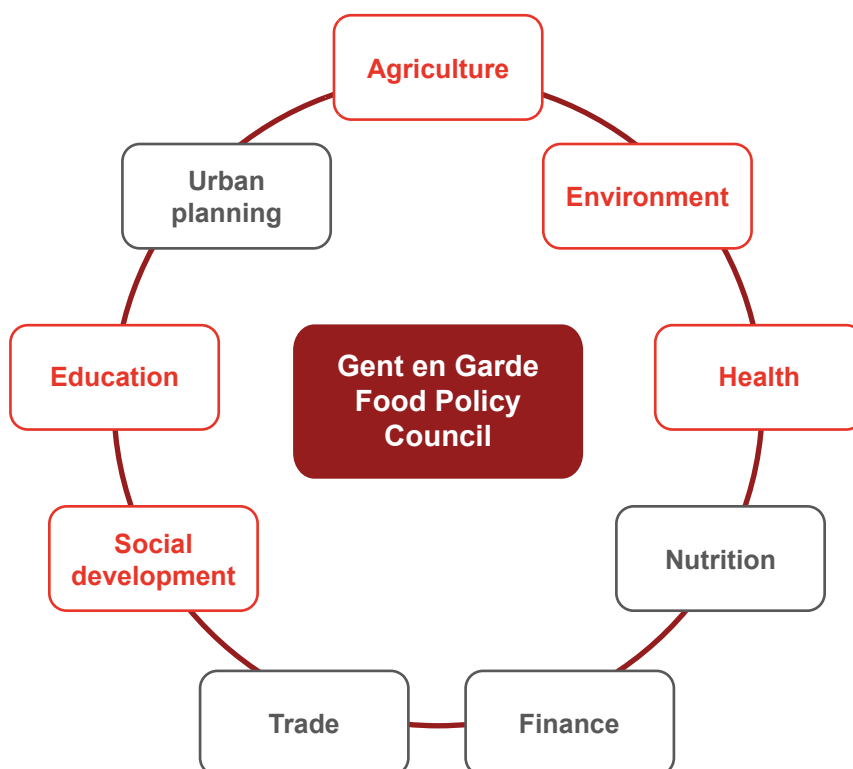


Figure 48. Sectors represented in the Gent en Garde FPC (in red)

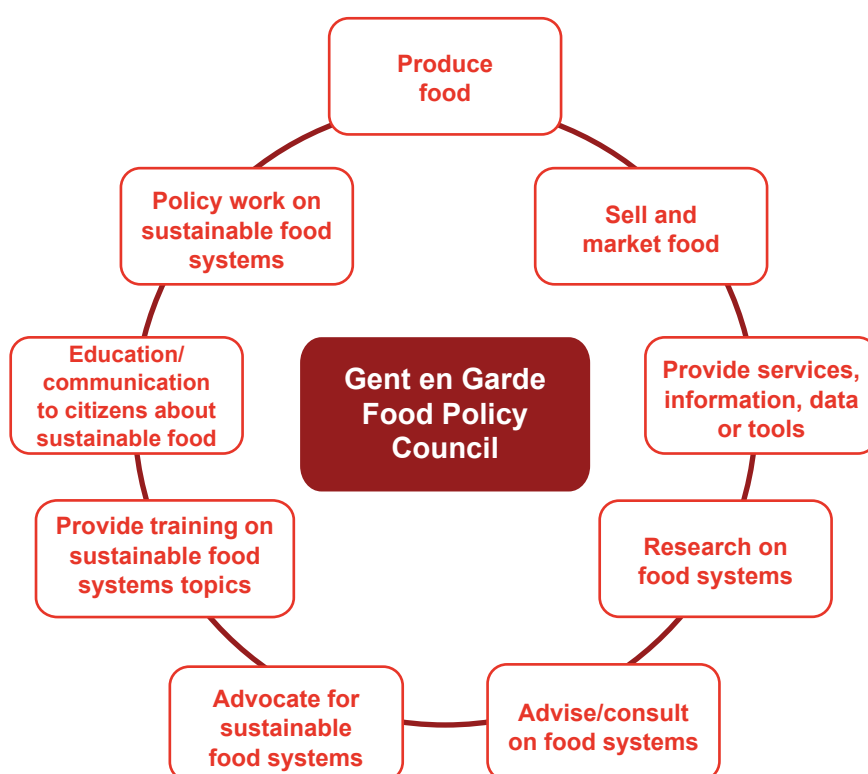


Figure 49. Activities represented in the Gent en Garde FPC (in red)



**Figure 50. Good governance principles practised by the Gent en Garde FPC (in red)**

In addition to regular meetings, participants also communicate regularly through emails, discussions and written consultations, for example.

### 2.1.3. Policy formulation and implementation

#### SFS policy formulation

The city of Ghent is a frontrunner in the promotion of sustainable food systems with a strong environmental focus. According to Forster et al (2015), its policy emerged in response to the social demand to reduce the impact of food on the environment.

Thanks to the holistic approach adopted by the Gent en Garde FPC, the city of Ghent is championing local, sustainable and tasty food. The aim is to achieve “green wins” all along the local food chain: from production, processing and distribution to consumption and waste management. When formulating the policy, trade-offs and agreements were addressed by finding common ground between positions through dialogue.

The agenda reflects the priorities of the local government and has been influenced by the interests of the stakeholders with the largest representation. The policy includes five strategic goals to chart the way toward a sustainable food system. The goals were agreed upon after several rounds of discussions among

stakeholders, after which the municipal administration’s input was added and political consensus was reached. These goals are:

- A shorter, more visible food chain;
- More sustainable food production and consumption;
- More social added value in food initiatives;
- The reduction of food waste;
- The optimum reuse of food waste as raw materials (Gent en Garde FPC, 2016).

Within the framework of the FPC, a core team was set up to fine-tune the global objectives of Gent en Garde and to translate them into strategic objectives and concrete operational goals. It is through this team that the Gent en Garde FPC assumed greater leadership of the city’s food policy, building a vision regarding the use of public agricultural land. The FPC has also made food-related contributions to the Ghent Climate Plan.

#### SFS policy implementation

The Climate and Environment Department of the city of Ghent is currently the entity responsible for the implementation of Gent en Garde, and it has a budget earmarked for this purpose. This department coordinates implementation with other units, sharing information and lessons learned, through direct cooperation and through formal and informal



coordination at political level. The different departments contribute with their work and budgets to the goals of the food strategy.

The Gent en Garde FPC is actively engaged in the implementation process via a number of thematic working groups where members of the FPC are represented and work with experts on specific themes. The SFS MSM currently works with flexible groups that are limited in time. Agricultural land, protein transition and the updating of the FPC's operational goals are the issues currently being addressed by working groups. In sum, the FPC is involved in the execution, monitoring, evaluation and communication of activities during implementation.

#### 2.1.4. Reported achievements and challenges

##### Achievements

The Gent en Garde FPC is a frontrunner and an outstanding example of a successful SFS MSM in Europe and worldwide. Its achievements are many and, according to UNFCCC (2020), these are due to a variety of tailored interventions.

- Gent en Garde has strong communication tools. Its online platform has already reached 20,439 individuals, and the map on the platform lists over 1,000 local initiatives. Its Facebook group has 1,828 members who actively participate.
- Since 2014, over 42 schools have received training in how to develop community garden beds on their campus; 240 parents and teachers have participated in these workshops.
- Another initiative – Veggie Day – has significantly changed the eating habits of local residents. Some 7 per cent of residents in Ghent are currently vegetarian, compared with a Belgian average of 2.3 per cent. Ghent was the first city in the world to introduce a vegetarian day.
- Local food availability has been increased through the establishment of suburban farmers markets and a new logistics platform for professional buyers. This platform facilitates fair and transparent short food supply chains between various local stakeholders. In the short term, it is estimated that this shorter food supply chain will cut emissions by 35.8 per cent compared with conventional food supply chains; this



Image credit: Lieta Goethijn, City of Ghent's Food policy coordinator

figure is expected to rise to 79 per cent in the longer term. This would represent a reduction in emissions of around 72.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent per year in the short term, and 482 tonnes in the longer term.<sup>83</sup>

- The Foodsavers project<sup>84</sup> has redistributed over 2,000 tonnes of food to those in need. It is estimated that this redistribution of food has saved around 2,540 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, while also playing an important role in alleviating poverty. The project also provides employment to local residents who have trouble finding jobs in the regular labour market, and enables better access to healthy food for those in need. It focuses on providing food that is both fresh and sustainable (70 per cent of all the redistributed food consists of fruit and vegetables from the wholesale market and distribution centres of retailers). This food is distributed through 106 food banks, social restaurants and social supermarkets. In total, 57,000 people in need (more than 20 per cent of Ghent's population) received meals or food baskets between 2019 and 2021.
- The school meals initiative brings healthy and sustainable food to all children in the city schools. Around 10 per cent of EUR 1 school meals are given to those who need financial support, providing Ghent's youngest residents with access to healthy and nutritious food.

Stakeholders identified the organization of local food-related projects through sponsorship or grants and the mobilization of stakeholders as the FPC's main concrete achievements, leading to meaningful outcomes. Additionally, 83 per cent of respondents believe that the SFS MSM has been instrumental in fostering networking and the sharing of valuable information between food stakeholders; 63 per cent of respondents are of the view that it has contributed to policy formulation, and 50 per cent believe that it has supported the emergence of new collaborations and concrete projects.

### Challenges

Half of the stakeholders surveyed pointed to the difficulty of reaching agreements in the face of conflicting agendas and interests as the main barrier to the Gent en Garde FPC's work. This is consistent with the fact that only half of the respondents consider that the FPC has a good mechanism for managing conflicts of interest and power relations (38 per cent) and for resolving disagreements (25 per cent). Very few

participants (25 per cent) reported that the structure and processes used are conducive to the equitable representation and participation of all members. Additionally, only half of the respondents believe that the mechanism's participatory learning processes are conducive to the capacity building of its members.

Regarding the FPC's response to COVID-19 food-related challenges, the Gent en Garde FPC organized a dedicated council meeting as soon as the pandemic hit, taking stock of the main effects and challenges. One of its conclusions was that the price shocks caused by the COVID-19 crisis affected some producers more than others, as those who had diversified to short supply chains were often better off. Based on this realization, the FPC decided to focus on short chain projects for its annual call for projects. However, in the stakeholder survey, respondents pointed to a perceived lack of capacity on the part of the SFS MSM to support effective decisions and interventions in the context of COVID-19: only 25 per cent of respondents considered the SFS MSM's response to the pandemic to be highly or very highly effective.

Finally, a limited number of respondents indicated challenges related to:

- The lack of concrete projects that are jointly undertaken by stakeholders;
- The low leverage or influence of decision-makers;
- The temporary unavailability of a facilitator due to delays in the preparation of the new contract.

### 2.1.5. Conclusion: Drivers of success for the Gent en Garde FPC

Ghent is one of the pioneering cities in Europe when it comes to incorporating environmental considerations into food issues. It was the first city in the Flanders region and one of the first European cities to launch its own sustainable food policy. According to the Ghent Climate Plan, the city aims to become climate-neutral by 2050,<sup>85</sup> reinforcing its climate change commitment by being the first city in Flanders to sign the Covenant of Mayors<sup>86</sup> in 2009.

The city's vision and ambitious plans began with the launch of the Gent en Garde food strategy, followed by the consolidation of the Gent en Garde Food Policy Council, and culminating with the signing of the Milan

<sup>83</sup><https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/planetary-health/ghent-en-garde>

<sup>84</sup><https://foodsavers.be/2017/gent/>

<sup>85</sup>Every year, the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO) provides the basic data concerning Ghent's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, which is supplemented with local data sources.

<sup>86</sup><https://www.covenantofmayors.eu/about/covenant-community/signatories.html>



Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPF) in 2015.<sup>87</sup> In addition, Ghent is a dynamic member of the RUAF Global Partnership, an active participant in the Eurocities' working group on food, a member of the Global Lead City Network on Sustainable Procurement, coordinated by ICLEI, and a partner in the Food Smart Cities for Development project.<sup>88</sup>

Gent en Garde has successfully set an example in Belgium and other European countries in terms of local sustainable food policy. The city regularly shares the approaches and lessons learned from its food initiatives with other Belgian cities, as well as with cities around the world.

According to the stakeholder survey, the success achieved by the Gent en Garde FPC can be credited to a number of factors.

First, an important aspect highlighted by the majority (63 per cent) of respondents is the diversity of members that make up the FPC. This inclusiveness has enabled networking and collaboration, which has favoured the building of trust among its members, as indicated by 75 per cent of respondents. However, only half of them consider that the structure and processes of the SFS MSM enable the equitable representation and participation of all members.

Second, the level of involvement of all parties has been fundamental to the Gent en Garde FPC's tangible achievements. In this regard, all respondents consider the involvement of the parties to be medium to high. The most engaged stakeholder group is the public sector (75 per cent of respondents consider the public sector to have a medium to high level of engagement), followed by the private sector and civil society (63 per cent) and farmers (50 per cent). The members' main motivations for participating in the FPC are to keep up to date and informed about food issues in the city, to network (both selected by 88 per cent of the participants) and to proudly represent the organization to which they belong (75 per cent).

Third, the level of government endorsement and support from high-level representatives is perceived as medium to high by 75 per cent of the survey participants.

Another important aspect contributing to the FPC's success is that the governance principles agreed upon by Gent en Garde FPC stakeholders are respected, according to the vast majority of survey participants (88 per cent). Additionally, all stakeholders believe that the FPC's communication is transparent, clear and effective, and 75 per cent consider that the meetings



Image credit: Lieta Goethijn, City of Ghent's Food policy coordinator

<sup>87</sup><http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/ghent/>

<sup>88</sup><https://www.rikolto.org/en/news/food-smart-cities-development-ghent-seminar>

are well organized and that most formal members actively participate in the work of the SFS MSM.

Good leadership practices have certainly underpinned the Gent en Garde FPC's achievements. This is reflected in the high percentage of respondents (88 per cent) who believe that the leadership shares power in decision-making, actively participates in welcoming new members, adequately reflects the input of all stakeholders in the products of the SFS MSM, and is receptive to new ideas. A lower percentage of stakeholders (63 per cent) believe that the leadership encourages all members to participate.

The majority of respondents (88 per cent) concur that the FPC identifies and articulates its vision, mission and goals among its members and that the food systems approach to policy formulation and implementation is understood by the majority of stakeholders. In addition, most participants (75 per cent) feel that the mechanism understands the overall policy environment related to its priorities and that it has

well-defined policy priorities, either as part of a food plan or as an overall strategy (according to 63 per cent of respondents).

All respondents indicated that the FPC has been effective in including the sustainability component in its work, which has been essential in guiding their strategies. Furthermore, 88 per cent consider the way in which the Gent en Garde FPC includes the food systems approach and meets the health and nutrition needs of the most vulnerable to be effective. In addition, the majority believe that the mechanism fosters inclusive and constructive dialogue (75 per cent of respondents) and promotes collaborative and coordinated action between all food system stakeholders (63 per cent of respondents).

Looking to the future, 75 per cent of the stakeholders who participated in the survey agreed that the two priority issues to be addressed should be consumer awareness and education, and sustainable food production.